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Message Text

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47
ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01

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---------- 100767
P R 181212Z MAR 75
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1737
INFO DIA WASHDC
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
AMEMBASSY MANILA
AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH
AMEMBASSY SAIGON
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
AMEMBASSY TAIPEI
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
AMEMBASSY RANGOON
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
USLO PEKING
AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI
AMCONSUL UDORN
AMCONSUL SONGKHLA

S E C R E T BANGKOK 4489

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, PINR, TH
SUBJ: KHUKRIT'S CABINET

REF: A. FBIS BK 171343 MAR 75
B. BANGKOK 4488

SUMMARY: HIS MAJESTY KING PHUMIPHON ADUNYADET OFFICIALLY
APPOINTED PRIME MINISTER KHUKRIT PRAMOT'S NEW CABINET ON
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MARCH 17. (REF A) KHUKRIT HAS ASSEMBLED A CABINET THAT

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IS LONG ON POLITICAL EXPERIENCE, CRONYISM, AND MONEY, BUT SHORT ON RELEVANT GOVERNMENT SERVICE AND PROFESSIONAL EXPERTISE. IT CONTAINS FEW OUTSTANDING INDIVIDUALS AND AT LEAST ONE, LIKE FOREIGN MINISTER CHATCHAI, WHO IS LIKELY TO BE AN IRRITANT IN THAI-U.S. RELATIONS. KHUKRIT HAS FILLED THE KEY PORTFOLIOS OF DEFENSE, FOREIGN AFFAIRS, FINANCE, AND INTERIOR WITH PROFESSIONALLY QUALIFIED AND EXPERIENCED MEN. IT APPEARS, HOWEVER, THAT IN ORDER TO INSURE SUPPORT FOR HIS COALITION, HE WAS FORCED TO AWARD MANY OF THE OTHER CABINET POSITIONS TO PARTY FOUNDERS, ADMINISTRATORS AND FINANCIAL BACKERS WHO ARE IN SOME CASES MEDIOCRE INDIVIDUALS WITH LITTLE OR NO MINISTERIAL EXPERIENCE AND LESS THAN IDEAL QUALIFICATIONS. END SUMMARY.

1. KHUKRIT RETAINED FINANCE, INTERIOR, AND JUSTICE FOR HIS OWN SOCIAL ACTION PARTY (SAP), BUT CONSENTED TO MEMBERS OF THE THAI NATION PARTY (TNP) FILLING DEFENSE AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS. HE GAVE THE GREATEST NUMBER OF CABINET POSITIONS TO THE SOCIAL JUSTICE PARTY (SJP), WHICH COMMANDS THE HIGHEST NUMBER OF VOTES IN PARLIAMENT OF ANY PARTY SUPPORTING THE GOVERNMENT. ALL TOGETHER, SAP HAS FOUR CABINET SEATS; TNP HAS FIVE; SOCIAL JUSTICE (SJP) HAS NINE; THE THAI, SOCIAL NATIONALIST, AND PEACEFUL PEOPLES PARTIES EACH HAVE TWO; THE LEFT OF CENTER PEOPLES FORCE HAS ONE; AND A PURPORTEDLY NONPARTISAN ADMIRAL HAS ONE. THERE IS NO REPRESENTATIVE FROM THE PEOPLE'S JUSTICE PARTY, WHICH EARLIER HAD BEEN EXPECTED TO JOIN IN THE COALITION. THREE CABINET MEMBERS, INCLUDING THAWIT KLINPRATHUM AND SIRI SIRIYOTHIN, ARE NOT MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT. ASSUMING ALL MP'S IN THE PARTIES REPRESENTED IN THE CABINET VOTE IN SUPPORT OF THE GOVERNMENT, KHUKRIT CAN COUNT ON 121 VOTES IN PARLIAMENT.

2. THE KHUKRIT CABINET CONTAINS A LARGE NUMBER OF MEN WITH STRONG TIES TO THE GOVERNMENTS OF THANOM KITTIKHACHON AND TO MILITARY LEADERS ASSOCIATED WITH PREVIOUS REGIMES. TWELVE IN THE CABINET WERE MEMBERS OF THANOM'S UNITED THAI PEOPLE'S PARTY AND A NUMBER OF THEM HELD EXECUTIVE POSITION IN IT. FOLLOWERS OF PRASOET RUCHIRAWONG, THAWI CHUNLASAP, AND PRAPHAT CHARUSATHIAN ARE WELL REPRESENTED.
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3. THE CABINET CONTAINS AT LEAST EIGHT RETIED MILITARY AND POLICE OFFICERS AND AT LEAST 15 WEALTHY BUSINESSMEN AND BANKERS. AT LEAST TWO, DEFENSE MINISTER PRAMAN AND DEPUTY FINANCE MINISTER THINNAKON, HAVE STRONG LINKS TO JAPANESE INVESTMENTS IN THAILAND. ONLY ONE, DEPUTY JUSTICE MINISTER BUNKHUM CHATHASISURIWONG CAN BE CONSIDERED INCLINED TOWARD SOCIALISM. PERHAPS WITH THE EXCEPTION OF PRIME MINISTER

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KHUKRIT, NONE IS KNOWN FOR HIS IDEALISM OR AS A LEADING
PROPONENT OF DEMOCRATIC IDEALS. THERE ARE MANY OLD STYLE,
HIGHLY EXPERIENCED MP'S BUT FEW IF ANY YOUNG TURKS LIKE
THOSE IN THE OUTGOING SENI CABIENT. A NUMBER, INCLUDING
IMPORTANT MINISTERS LIKE PRAMAN, SIRI, AND THAWIT, HAVE A
HISTORY OF BLATANT CORRUPTION.

4. ON THE WHOLE THE CABINET IS LESS EDUCATED THAN THE
PREVIOUS THREE CABINETS. THERE ARE 6 MILITARY ACADEMY
GRADUATES, 1 PH.D., 2 WITH MASTER'S DEGREES, 6 WITH
BACHELOR'S DEGREES, 6 HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES AND 1 WITH
LESS THAN A HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATION; THERE ARE 4 LAWYERS
AMONG THE BA'S. THE CABINET HAS FEW FOREIGN UNIVERSITY
GRADUATES. THE AVERAGE AGE OF THE CABINET IS ABOUT 54. DESPITE
PRIME MINISTER KHUKRIT'S RATHER LIBERAL POLICY STATEMENT
(REF B), THE CABINET IS LOADED WITH CONSERVATIVES WHO WILL
PROBABLY RESIST DRASTIC DEPARTURES FROM THE POLICIES OF
PREVIOUS MILITARY GOVERNMENTS. NO ONE IN THE CABINET IS KNOWN FOR
ANTI-AMERICAN ATTITUDES.

5. KHUKRIT HAS ALREADY COME UNDER ATTACK IN THE PRESS
AND THE PARLIAMENT ON SEVERAL ACCOUNTS. HE HAS INCLUDED TWO
IN HIS CABINET, SIRI AND THAWIT, WHO LOST THE JANUARY PAR-
LIAMENTARY ELECTIONS, AND A LARGE NUMBER OF INDIVIDUALS
ASSOCIATED WITH THE DEPARTED "TRIO." HIS FAILURE TO NAME
DEPUTY MINISTERS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS INDUSTRY, COMMERCE, STATE
UNIVERSITIES, AND A SECOND DEPUTY MINISTER OF DEFENSE LEADS
CRITICS TO ASSUME THAT HE WILL FILL THESE POSITIONS WITH
OTHER UNSUCCESSFUL POLITICIANS AND ASSOCIATES OF THANOM
AND PRAPHAT IF PARLIAMENT GIVES HIS CABINET A VOTE OF
CONFIDENCE. KHUKRIT HAS ALSO AROUSED LONG SIMMERING REGIONAL
SENSITIVITIES BY APPOINTING 18 NATIVES OF CENTRAL THAILAND,
WHICH HAS TRADITIONALLY DOMINATED CABINETS AND THE BUREAUCRACY,
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AND ONLY FOUR FROM THE NORTH, THREE FROM THE NORTHEAST,
AND NONE FROM THE SOUTH. THESE STRESSES MAY COST
THE KHUKRIT CABINET THE MANDATORY VOTE OF CONFIDENCE IN
PARLIAMENT.
MASTERS

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TAGS: PGOV, PINR, TH, (KHUKRIT PRAMOT)
To: STATE
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